LETTER

TO THE

[redacted]

[redacted]

PROVINCE of ULSTER

[redacted]

DUBLIN:

[redacted]

LETTER

TO THE

Irish Relief Company of Volunteers

PROVINCE OF ULSTER.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

LETTER, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

I DID not ſee till lately the addreſs from the firſt Belfaſt company of volunteers to the other corps of the province of Ulſter, or I ſhould have taken an earlier occaſion of attending to ſo intereſting a publication, in which ſome notice has been taken of my public conduct in the late queſtions concerning the conſtitution and commerce of Ireland. I believe it is unneceſſary for me to ſay, that my anxious endeavours have never been wanting to promote the great objects of your addreſs; and I have beheld, with great ſatisfaction, the gradual progreſs of public opinion in their favor. Where ſome years ago, in conjunction with your reſpectable countryman Lord Nugent, I introduced a bill for a partial emancipation of the

 commerce

the numerous difficulties we had to encounter, that arguments drawn from the nature of trade, the authorities of the beſt writers, as well as the practice of the moſt enlightened nations, were inſufficient to the great purpoſe we had in view, unleſs Ireland, by a vigorous exertion, did juſtice to herſelf, and by doing ſo, added wealth and power to the Britiſh empire at large. I ſaw the exertion made—the conſequences were ſuch as every man knew they muſt be.—We heard no more of addreſſes to cramp the induſtry and reſtrain the commerce of a ſiſter kingdom; the parliament of Great Britain reſtored to its free agency, and conſulting its own wiſdom, and not the prejudices of a part of its conſtituents, by one liberal and comprehenſive act, admitted Ireland to a participation of every commercial privilege, it remained in our power to offer you. Perhaps in ſome of the regulations conſequent to this change of ſyſtem, Ireland may have reaſon to complain. I enter not into the detail, I ſpeak only of the principle of equality which was the profeſſed baſis of thoſe regulations. When this great meaſure had taken place, I was often aſked, by perſons unconnected with your

kingdom. Will not Ireland be ſatisfied now? Shall we hear ſtill of Iriſh grievances? My anſwer was ſuch, as the reaſon of the thing, and your declarations ſuggeſted to me. "That the "conceſſion made by one parliament might be "retracted by another; that no merchant would "embark his property on ſuch a precarious ſecu-"rity; that a free trade was illuſory, unleſs ſe-"cured by a free conſtitution." When I recur to the hiſtory of this memorable tranſaction, I beg not to be underſtood, that the miniſter, through whoſe hands it principally paſſed, appears to me blamable for not gratifying by the ſame act every wiſh and pretenſion of Ireland. I voted againſt him in ſeveral Iriſh queſtions, but I could not but be ſenſible that he had a very difficult taſk to execute; that he was bound to attend to the temper, and accommodate himſelf to the feelings of both countries, and guard againſt a colliſion between them. Had he attempted four years ago to do more, he might perhaps have been diſappointed in his attempt, and involved the peace of both countries, in the conſequences of that diſappointment. Whoever judges of the miniſter of a free country in very critical conjunctures, without a reference to the opinions of the day on which he is called upon to act, will often condemn him

without

without reaſon; and I will venture to add, that if you compare the late miniſter's conduct reſpecting Ireland with that of any of his predeceſſors, ſince the days of king William, you will, I think, admit, that inſtead of deſerving blame, for not doing more in favour of Ireland, he is entitled to your good opinion for laying the foundation, on which, I truſt, a ſure fabric of public liberty and future opulence will be erected. I do not make this obſervation to gratify my private feelings, but to inculcate this practical truth on your minds, that whatever you have obtained, you owe to your own virtues endeavours; that while your objects are, as they have hitherto been, founded in juſtice, and in the conſtitution, you cannot fail of ſucceſs; and that your only danger is from the adoption of a belief, that all is already obtained which you want for yourſelves and your poſterity. In mentioning the recent tranſaction which makes the ſubject of your addreſs, I beg to premiſe, that I ſpeak with the utmoſt deference to the judgments of thoſe who differ with me in opinion; I look up to many of them as ornaments to their country and to human nature, but we live under a government where public queſtions may be freely diſcuſſed; I neither aſſert nor think, that Ireland

has

has been betrayed; but my conviction tells me that she deceives herself, if she supposes her liberties are yet built on a sure and immoveable foundation; or that the best security has been given for the future enjoyment of them, which the nature of the case, and the circumstances of the present time, enable you to obtain. A minute review of the transaction, will corroborate the sentiments you have promulged in your address. I never remember any matter more eagerly expected, since I sat in parliament, than the opening of Mr. Fox's plan to appease the discontents of Ireland; to me, who knew particularly the anxious state of the public mind, every day's delay appeared a circumstance of danger, but delay was my only apprehension. The parliament of Ireland had wisely put itself at the head of an armed community, to obtain a recognition of the rights which belonged to it, and I knew that the parliament of Great Britain was too prudent, under such circumstances, to decline acceding to it. That the concessions Mr. Fox proposed to the House of Commons, were unclogged by any species of condition; that instead of attempting to negociate and make a bargain, he placed an implicit reliance on your generosity,

proof, that he knew the temper of a free people; and I gave my humble tribute of thanks to him, and to his colleagues, for their manly conduct. How then has it happened, that ſo fair a proſpect has been darkened, and that public diſcontents again begin to prevail? It required no prophetical ſpirit to foretel that it could not be otherwiſe. You know very well, that when Mr. Fox propoſed a reſolution for a repeal of the declaratory act, he accompanied it with another, ſtating, in the firſt part, an undoubted truiſm, under a ſtipulation of equal trade and equal liberty, "That the intereſts of "the two kingdoms are inſeparable;" in the ſecond part, "That their connections ought to "be founded on a ſolid and permanent baſis." What poſſible interpretation could be put upon theſe words, but that further meaſures were intended to be taken to aſcertain the political relation of the two countries to each other? Ireland had done her part, ſhe had ſtated the extent of her expectations, ſhe had declared her determination to abide at all events by the fate of a ſiſter kingdom, if her legiſlative independence was admitted; and no miniſter could be wild enough to ſuppoſe, that her parliament would, almoſt at the ſame inſtant that

ſhe

ſhe aſſerted her rights without reſerve, ad-
mit that in any poſſible caſe Great Britain
ſhould legiſlate for her. When I talk of poſ-
ſible caſes, I always mean to except the power
to regulate the ſucceſſion to the crown, which
is the only inſtance I knew of, in which a power
of controlling every part of the Britiſh do-
minions, is and ought for ever to remain in the
Britiſh parliament; but this is effectually provid-
ed for by the Iriſh act, declaring the perpetual
annexation of the crowns of both kingdoms to
each other. However theſe words may ſince have
been cavilled at; the intention of them at the
time was undoubtedly this, that Great Britain
would ſecure by acts of her own the liber-
ties of Ireland, and in the mean time would
prove her ſincerity by repealing the 6th of George
I. If the repeal then only has taken place, and
no further meaſures are purſued to ſecure the
connexion on a ſolid and permanent baſis, is it
not a confeſſion on the part of this country, that
the miniſters have left the great work of ſettle-
ment incomplete, and that the doctrine contain-
ed in your addreſs is founded in truth, and re-
gard to the joint intereſts of both kingdoms?
Unconnected as I was with the miniſters of the
day, but anxious to co-operate with them in

their

their Irish measures, I observed to the House, that "unless the repeal of the declaratory act "was attended by an express renunciation of "the right to bind Ireland by British acts of par- "liament, I knew that Ireland would not be "satisfied; that the bill of repeal might be so "framed as to answer this great object, but that "unless the reasons for originally passing it were "disclaimed in the preamble, or that enacting "words were introduced into the body of the bill, "which might bind the faith and honour of all "future parliaments, it could not but be receiv- "ed by the Irish nation as an half-measure, as a "concession owing to the circumstances of the "day, which might or might not be adhered to "in future times; that while a long bead-roll of "laws, purporting to bind Ireland, remained in "our statute-book unrepealed, it would leave "the question of right on the worst possible issue "between the two kingdoms, each having con- "stitutional arguments to resort to in favour of "its respective pretensions, and that doubtful "claims had been in every age the curse of man- "kind. That the repeal proposed would only "carry things back to the situation they were "in before the 6th of George the First, at "which period Great Britain was in full exer- "cise of the power of binding Ireland; that

"no

" no man could ſeriouſly think, that becauſe the
" act " for the better ſecuring the dependence
" of Ireland" was at an end; that therefore the
" dependance itſelf was at an end; or in other
" words, that by taking away the regulation, you
" take away the thing which was propoſed to be
" regulated. That the angry act which paſſed
" ſome years ago, for annihilating the aſſembly
" of New York, in caſe of a non-compliance
" with the mutiny bill, might as well be argued
" to be the foundation of all Britiſh authority in
" America: as both ſtatutes were of a ſimiliar
" ſort, and were enacted for ſimiliar purpoſes,
" to produce ſubmiſſion to claims as old as the
" common law, and which could not be deſtroy-
" ed by implication. That the ſame motives
" which induce parties in a private tranſaction of
" importance to guard againſt ambiguity and li-
" tigation, by reducing the agreement to writ-
" ing, ought to prevail among nations. That
" the act of union with Scotland was a proof that
" nations may conclude on a certain footing:
" that the Scotch nation had ſecured its privi-
" leges by a legal, which is the only ſecurity,
" that nothing in that tranſaction was left to oral
" tradition to ſupply, or to the hiſtory of the
" times to expound; that the record ſpoke for

" itself, and no article of it ever had been or ever
" would be infringed, until honor and faith were
" banished from the globe, because the two
" nations know what they owe to each other,
" and the law is the common umpire between
" them. That I thought a country, circum-
" stanced as Ireland is, inferior in strength, and
" dependent in so many circumstances on the
" councils of Great Britain, would not content to
" hold, on a more constitutive security, the en-
" joyment of every thing that is dear to her;
" that I considered the exemption of Ireland in the
" marine mutiny bill, to which the house had
" agreed without a single dissenting voice on a mo-
" tion from me but a few weeks before (though
" no Irish law at that time existed for the go vern-
" ment of the many regiments which are raised in
" Ireland for the service) as a first instance
" of the willingness of parliament to abandon all
" interference in the internal economy of Ireland;
" that the great object after that to be provid-
" ed for was, that the Irish merchant might in fu-
" ture navigate the high seas, wherever his own
" industry might lead him to the best market,
" unrestrained by any power which could be in-
" terested in checking his prosperity, and sub-
" ject only to the necessary satisfaction of not
" holding

"verdict, that the simple repeal of a bill[illegible]
"statute, which originated in a mistaken view of the
"jurisdiction of Ireland, was at best a very awk-
"ward, if not inadequate mode of settling the
"controversy about the independence of her
"legislature."

As this argument, which I suppose to be the
last person who started in either kingdom, has
since been most ably answered in print by Mr.
Flood, I am ashamed to detain you by repeating
any part of it: the force of it, however ill appre-
ed by me, was abundantly felt, several members
expressed their acquiescence in it; until Mr. Fox
declared, that as giving satisfaction to Ireland
was the great object he had in view, he should so
frame the bill as to answer that desirable purpose.
You remember, Gentlemen, that much time
elapsed between the agreement of the House of
Commons to the two resolutions, and the pro-
duction of the bill of repeal. The world natu-
rally supposed, that the interval was employed
in consulting the first lawyers of both kingdoms,
and that an act of final settlement should arise
out of so much consultation and consideration.
You may judge then of my surprise, and that

of

of many others, when we found that ſuch expectations had been raiſed to ſo little purpoſe, and that the miniſterial plan conſiſted of a ſimple repeal of the declaratory act. A ſurpriſe which nothing could heighten but the anſwer I received from perſons in the higheſt authority, to a propoſal I made of amending it in the manner I have deſcribed. "Ireland does not wiſh it—"Ireland is ſatisfied with the bill in its preſent "form: we are ſo aſſured by thoſe who ſtand "higheſt in the confidence of the nation, with "whom the Iriſh adminiſtration is in the habit of "conſulting." To ſuch information I thought myſelf bound to ſubmit. I know there are perſons in Ireland who ridicule the idea of a renunciation by Great Britain, and who aſk with a pride, I think much miſplaced, "ſhall Ireland "owe any part of her conſtitutional ſecurity to "a Britiſh act of parliament? If ſhe does, the "ſame power which gives may reſume. If ſhe "calls for a renunciation of any authority, ſhe "indirectly admits its exiſtence." As to the former queſtion, I have no doubt of anſwering, yes; if the bill is *bona fide*, what it profeſſes to be. If indeed the preamble ſtated the rightful claim of Great Britain to bind you, ſuch a bill would be inadmiſſible, even although in the enacting part,

the

the exercise of it was renounced, because it grounded on expediency, although apparently relinquished, it might be considered as a ſtrict declaration of the right; or if the renunciation was confined to any particular part or ſubject of legiſlation, as for inſtance, to the internal concerns of Ireland, it might be conſtrued unfavourable to the freedom of your navigation, becauſe omitted in the act. But if the proviſion is general, and the language in which it is expreſſed is unambiguous, it muſt be a complete ſecurity, as no nation could think of reviving a claim, of which, by ſo ſolemn an act of her own, ſhe had diveſted herſelf. As to the latter queſtion, ſuch a ſophiſm cannot, I think, have impoſed upon any man. There is a clear diſtinction in the nature of things, between rights and claims, which has marked in all ages the conduct of nations towards each other, as well as of ſubjects at many memorable periods towards the governments under which they lived. You may ſafely admit, that Great Britain has long claimed a right to bind you by her laws, becauſe that is only the admiſſion of an hiſtorical fact, and does not imply that ſhe had a particle of juſt right. The king of Pruſſia, in every tranſaction with the Houſe of Auſtria, demands a

confirmation

[illegible] of the original [illegible] of [illegible] to his family. Can [illegible] a demand be ascertained to [illegible] on his part, that Austria has a right to encroach upon that ancient part of his dominions? If that confining is just, Magna Charta was a presumptuous measure, and the barons who called upon king John to do them justice in the fields, by that call admitted all his usurpations to be legal. How much would their plain sense have revolted against such a fallacy! Their object was natural and wise; they wished to maintain their loyalty to their king, but they wished also to maintain their own liberties: they knew that both king and people are equally unhappy, when [illegible] of magistrates, that the limits of power ought to be permanently fixed, that subjects ought equally to know what they owe to the sovereign, and the sovereign what he owes to his subjects. The case of confederated nations under a common sovereign, calls equally for plain and immoveable landmarks of law. Who can contemplate the unhappy war in which we are at present involved with the colonies, without perceiving that it arises from the undefined and unexplained nature of their governments? That if such an happy occasion of temporarily defining our respective pretensions had arisen between

between Great Britain and America, as the preſent moment offers to Great Britain and Ireland, an ocean of kindred blood had been ſaved: but the hiſtory of this war furniſhes us with an exact precedent of what ought to be done. The parliament of Great Britain did, in expreſs terms, for ever abandon all right to tax America: I do not recollect, that the competency of parliament to paſs ſuch an act was called in queſtion, though ſome objected to the policy of it: but no man will ſeriouſly contend, that if peace had taken place with the colonies, on the foundation of that ſtatute, any American would have apprehended a future exerciſe of the power of taxing; though it is within the compaſs of poſſibility, that one parliament may revoke the meaſures of another. Admitting that poſſibility to have weight, does it follow that becauſe you cannot guard againſt every poſſible contingency, that you ſhould not take every precaution which human prudence can ſuggeſt? In ſhort, if an expreſs and direct ſecurity was to be given to America, againſt the encroachments of a power which ſhe dreaded, why was a conſtructive one deemed ſufficient for Ireland? Were the difference not founded in reaſon and in law, but exiſted only in the imaginations

ginations of men, a wiſe government ought carefully to avoid it; for that policy muſt be fatal to ſociety, which furniſhes a pretence to ſuppoſe that in proportion as the ſubject is orderly in his deportment, obedient to the laws, and loyal to his ſovereign, his rights are to be conſidered as doubtful, and the tenure of his liberty becomes inſecure. I perceive a diſpoſition to judge ſeverely of the motives of every man who preſumes to think or to ſay, that any part of this tranſaction has been unwiſe or equivocal; and the generous feelings of the Iriſh nation, not their ſound ſenſe, is appealed to, to reſiſt any further attempt to clear up the terms under which they and their poſterity are to remain in future connected with Great Britain. If the ſubject was not of the utmoſt moment, if it was not equally the intereſt of both kingdoms to ſettle the controverſy on ſuch grounds that no raſh miniſter may hereafter venture to revive it, I ſhould think, I did the office of a bad citizen even in expreſſing theſe ſentiments to you: but the people of Ireland are not now to learn, that antient claims are reluctantly parted with by any people: that the parliament of Great Britain has immemorially exerciſed the right of binding Ireland

by

by laws, and that your anceſtors have acquieſced under and ſubmitted to thoſe laws: they are not now to learn, that the councils of every government are fluctuating and uncertain, but that the love of power is a feature which diſtinguiſhes them at all times. If they want an inſtance, they cannot but recollect, that the ſame Britiſh parliament which repealed the ſtamp act, impoſed three years afterwards a tea act, which could never have happened, if indirect and conſtructive promiſes were held in the ſame ſacred light as poſitive and ſpecific engagements: but politicians, who will try to evade the one, are not ſo daring as to violate the other. That any ſuch attempt as I now allude to will be made under the preſent circumſtances, or perhaps in the preſent age, while the ſtrength of Ireland is equal to her ſpirit, and the particulars which diſtinguiſhed the hiſtory of laſt winter, are freſh in every man's memory, I moſt readily admit; but he muſt have read hiſtory with very little attention, who will venture to aſſert, or who will adviſe his country to act upon the aſſertion, that ſuch a caſe is impoſſible ever to happen. Your iſland has made a wonderful effort in arming and diſciplining a whole people, but you have had two ſtrong and equally honour-

able motives for doing so, you had your coast to defend against a foreign enemy, and a constitution to secure against a foreign jurisdiction. A peace will naturally remove the first of these apprehensions, and when the bulk of the nation is perſuaded that the independency of your legiſlature is placed beyond the reach of violence or of ſeduction, it is in the natural courſe of things, that the military aſſociations, to which you owe ſo much, will inſenſibly decline. Peace too, by reducing the intereſt of money, will enable the Iriſh merchants to borrow, and avail themſelves of that free commerce, by which, from the adverſe circumſtances of the laſt three years, you ſcarcely perceive yourſelves to be benefitted. The increaſe of a commercial, always operates to the abatement of the military ſpirit of a country: as labour riſes in value, the ſacrifice of time, which the keeping up of military habits requires, will be much enhanced, and if any plan like that of the Engliſh militia ſhall be adopted, the bulk of the people will inſenſibly begin to think, that to them the buſineſs of arms exclusively belongs. The public ſpirit of Ireland may perhaps retard, but cannot prevent the operation of that jealouſy, which the difference of a militia paid by, and a militia gratuitouſly

tuitously ſerving the public, will occaſion; and you cannot be ignorant, that thoſe weak men among us, who ſee matter of alarm in the extent and ſpirit of your aſſociations, have uniformly wiſhed, by raiſing one armed body againſt another, to ſeparate the national force which they could not break. You who live on the ſpot, are the beſt judges whether any ſuch conſequences are likely to ariſe for ſome time; but I ſee enough to convince me, that ſuch a thing may happen. If then, on one hand, I may ſuppoſe the national force of Ireland may decline, on the other hand it may be preſumed, that Great Britain, by rigid œconomy, and accommodating her conduct in every reſpect to her circumſtances, may, after a few years peace, recover a great proportion of her ſtrength. To her commerce alone ſhe muſt look, as the foundation of both revenue and navy; and being for the firſt time deprived of ſeveral branches ſhe formerly enjoyed, ſhe will naturally watch thoſe which remain in her power with a more ſharp-ſighted jealouſy than ever. Perhaps the fears formerly expreſſed of a free trade to Ireland, may in ſome inſtances prove true at the period which I ſuppoſe, and a preference be given at a foreign

market

market to ſome articles of Iriſh manufacture. Inſtead of exerting himſelf to recover the ground he has loſt by improving the quality of his goods, we know a merchant's firſt idea is to apply for a prohibition and a monopoly. What reception will the miniſter of Great Britain give to ſuch an application? Were Scotland the object of jealouſy to the Engliſh merchant, the miniſter would tell him to look into the articles of Union, which had expreſly bound up the queſtion between the nations for ever. Has Ireland ſuch a fixed conſtitution to boaſt of? In what page of the ſtatute-book of either kingdom is it to be found? Have you enabled the Britiſh miniſter to point out to the merchant, that the thing he applies for is impoſſible? The Merchant will naturally ſay, "that he knows "of many Engliſh laws which are yet in force "againſt Ireland, becauſe he never heard that "an act of parliament could be got rid of but "by an actual repeal: that as theſe reſtrictions "operated before the declaratory act was in be"ing, they muſt have equal authority after it is "expunged and forgotten: that he knows at "the time of the repeal, it was not conſidered "as a renunciation of the right in either king"dom." He will produce the declarations of miniſters,

miniſters, who at the very moment of propoſing the meaſure, held up the neceſſity of one controlling authority thro' the whole empire; he will ſay alſo, "that the Iriſh legiſlature, having "theſe ſpeeches in their hands, yet admitted that "a repeal was ſufficient without a renunciation: "that although particular bodies of men had "thanked Mr. Flood for his advice, no ſtep was "taken in conſequence of it; and that the bulk "of the nation, though they found they had not "obtained that conſtitution which they conſider-"ed as their birthright, yet diſclaimed any fur-"ther call on the juſtice of Great Britain."

Perhaps in addition to theſe arguments, drawn from hiſtory and from law, it may be ſuggeſted to the miniſter, that the experiment may ſafely be tried; that if he uſes general words in applying the reſtraint, he may afterwards declare that Ireland is or is not comprehended, according to the event; If the Iriſh nation, abating as ſhe grows richer in her eagerneſs for liberty, and unwilling to riſque a conteſt with a kingdom to which ſhe is ſo cloſely allied, acquieſces for a moment, the boaſted acquiſitions of 1782 are at one ſtroke annihilated; one precedent lays the ground-work of another, and the trade of Ireland again will be trampled upon by every combination

bination of petty traders, who fancy they see their own advantage in her humiliation. If, on the contrary, her ſpirit continues high; if ſhe claims her rights in that firm but temperate language, which the conſciouſneſs of a good cauſe never fails to inſpire; the miniſter who is unjuſt enough to make the attempt, will afterwards be ſo meaſt as to diſclaim it; It will be called a clerical error, or the unmeaning jargon of the Cuſtom-Houſe; The apology may perhaps be accepted, and a further attempt againſt the rights of Ireland be adjourned till a more favourable occaſion. Whoever ſees no danger from the ſtate of things which I have endeavoured to deſcribe, muſt be a bolder man than I profeſs to be. He is much miſtaken if he thinks that an encreaſe of weight thrown into the popular ſcale of Great Britain, will diminiſh the riſque. The freeſt governments are always the moſt jealous of their dependencies; the reſpect they ſhew to the privileges of others, is not proportioned to the anxiety they profeſs for their own, and the more immediately we are connected with, and dependent on the people who elect us, the more liable we ſhall be to act under theſe impreſſions, which muſt ever be of a popular caſt in a trading kingdom, unleſs guarded againſt by fixed barriers

[illegible]

[illegible] nothing but the urgency of the moment, and the necessity of securing present time, could justify the forcing the subjects of Ireland to read the English statutes, and search in them for the rule of their actions. Surely when a time for more deliberation is permitted, it will be thought better to pass distinctly and separately Irish laws with similar provisions. That the trade of the two kingdoms must be put in many, and perhaps most instances, on an equal footing, or the same foreign treaty which applies to the one will not be applicable to the other, I readily admit. But it is by no means a matter of indifference how this is done; for if you do it by reference to English statutes, and by a general provision, that such as confer equal benefits, and impose equal restraints shall be in force in Ireland, you transfer the power of deciding how long they shall so continue, with regard to yourselves, from your own legislature to another. But when I am writing to a corps of Ulster volunteers, I cannot omit the critical

duration of the linen trade, and my apprehensions of its decline, if it exists much longer, by connivance only, and without the sanction of law; as those who are concerned in it must feel, that the assurances of the linen board under which they at present act, are inadequate to their security, and that in a country govered by law, parliament alone is competent to give them complete relief. But if these reasons are not deemed sufficient, it appears to me that the late arrangements make annual sessions of your parliament indispensably necessary. While Great Britain exercised the power of making laws for you, to grant money, and to regulate the internal police of the kingdom, were the only objects of deliberation to your parliament; from foreign politics you were totally excluded, your foreign trade was regulated by negociations on which you never were consulted, and of which you scarcely knew any thing; you were involved in the consequences of every war which Great Britain thought it her interest to undertake, but though you partook of every burthen, you never shared till a late period any of the advantages resulting from her success. How different is your situation now? For the first time you assume that rank and importance

which

which belongs to you in the eſtimate of our exiſtence. Great Britain, defeated by every nation which ſhe has ſucceſſively fought with ſingle hands, finds in a neglected ſource ſuch reſources, and a fidelity of conduct towards her could alone draw forth, and which no foreign alliance could ſupply; while Ireland thinks herſelf repaid for every effort by the conſideration, that the value of her friendſhip is properly underſtood, and that in every future queſtion of war and of peace, of commerce and of politics, the ſenſe of the Iriſh public will have its due weight. If this change of ſyſtem appears to you as it does to me, a new æra of happineſs to both kingdoms, how painful is the recollection, that any thing ſhould be wanting to ſecure an enjoyment of it.

Two meaſures have been propoſed for this purpoſe; the one by an Iriſh law, declaring that in caſe the king of Great Britain ſhall aſſent to an act of parliament purporting to bind Ireland, then and from thenceforward the law which annexes the crown of Ireland inſeparable to that of England ſhall *ipſo facto* be repealed. The other, by obtaining an engliſh law, to diſclaim all legiſlative authority over Ireland. With reſpect to

the

the Irish, from not forming the exact boundary of an Irish bill of rights, such a measure, properly framed, may be of great advantage; but I cannot believe the Irish parliament will readily grant a sanction, which potentially separates the kingdoms, and impeaches the title of future kings, on a contingency taking place, owing perhaps to chance-medley, and not to system; to the ignorance of individuals, not to the politics of that body to which they belong; yet in both cases the penalty would attach, because it is impossible to discriminate them in drawing the bill. If there does not constitute with justice, to point your resentments at the monarch, for an offence committed against your rights by the distinctive parts of our constitution, in which he must be entirely passive, from the duties of the royal negative. It is absolutely safe to take care, that in your attempts to guard against the interposition of Great Britain in Irish concerns, you may not do towards her what you justly inveigh against in your own case, for an Irish law, professing to the British monarch in what manner he shall exercise his prerogative with respect to acts of the British legislature, will undoubtedly bear that construction. These are matters of intricate and nice speculation, which I hope never

to

[illegible] between the two [illegible]
humble good will and good behaviour [illegible]
[illegible] the difpofition. Affairs [illegible] as
were the interefts of Great Britain on all the
occafion, nothing could be more dangerous to
her internal peace, than to mislead the minds
of the people on the fubject of their religion,
by pointing out new and conftructive rules of
loyalty in this cafe. You muft know that
much mifchief has arifen in former times from
the heat and violence to which fimilar difputes
have given rife. When the death of princes,
and other revolutions, produce[illegible] a fufpi-
cion of things, it muft be attended with religious
fears, but to encourage a modern authority of
parliament, and in a cafe which does not require
that peculiar fanction, will I think appear to
you upon mature confideration improper. I
forbear to enlarge upon the intended commemoration
of the revolution of 1688 as well the public
as the illuftrious object, as to a people eager for liberty
and mindful of their great deliverer, it re-
calls the memorable revolution of 1688. That
tranfaction was original in its nature, it remains
on the page of hiftory a leffon to all future
times to refpect the rights of the people. It
refts on its own merits, and appeals to no fo-

reign

[illegible] for its [illegible], but [illegible] all [illegible], in my [illegible] has attempted to [illegible] the principles by which it was brought about, or to define the cases in which allegiance shall cease to be a duty, and resistance become justifiable in the subject.

High as the pulse of the public beat for liberty after that memorable era, and anxious as the nation was to prevent in future the mischiefs which they had so lately escaped, yet this mode of obtaining security was never resorted to. The parliament abolished the dangerous branches of the prerogative which king James and his predecessors had abused; they reduced the theory of our constitution to such clear and fixed principles, that no sovereign could err in future but by design. But here they wisely stopt; if they never attempted defining the cases in which the crown should again be forfeited, I have a right to conclude, that they regarded the experiment as unnecessary or dangerous; unnecessary, because when the measure of oppression is full, the subject will look his safety in resistance, whether invited to it by an act of parliament or not: dangerous, inasmuch as it furnishes pretences to revolt and disobedience,

If I am in the sentiments I have just offered, you will not think the worst, very blameable one, that which I have been led, by my regard to the principles of the revolution, I have shewn the more strongly my objections to the bill in question, or rather to the particular mode in which it was proposed to enforce it: because I should be sorry that your thoughts and opinions were diverged from a measure which I think both safe and practicable in one, which perhaps you might not wish to decline, and which you might be unable to evade. Setting aside the idea of this bill is founded on a presumption, that Ireland has not distinctly offered her assistance in this respect, it is impossible to say any thing has been done. But the assertion of a party in his own cause, is not equal to the admission of his adversary: Ireland may for ever protest against the claim, but no renunciation of it can be effectual which does not proceed from Great Britain; this is the measure which I have

at heart, because I know if Great Britain unequivocally ſpeaks out, ſhe will not at any future moment violate her engagement. I am confident then's minds were fully prepared for this very meaſure in the laſt ſeſſion of parliament; I am confident it would have been aſſented to, had the claim been made by thoſe who had authority to do ſo in your behalf. If you are diſappointed that it did not take place, do not attribute to want of ſincerity in us what aroſe from inadvertency in ſome of you. Great Britain was as well diſpoſed as the country can be, to gratify the wiſhes of another; but it was too much to expect of her to give more to Ireland than Ireland ſeemed to require; nor if you were ſatisfied with a weaker ſecurity for your liberties, was it her buſineſs to obtrude a more effectual one upon you. Depend upon it the error lay here. Great Britain being willing to concede the ſubſtance, never meant to diſpute with you about the mode; that was the buſineſs of the miniſters to prepare, and parliament took it upon truſt that they would not recommend any meaſure which ſhould fail of giving compleat ſatisfaction; for the univerſal deſire of our Houſe of Commons was, to cloſe for ever the account with Ireland. If then perfect freedom was left

sensible

state of the people of Ireland, that a short postponement of her legislative supremacy should take place, they will bring forward the necessary measures for that purpose. Great Britain can not purchase a cheaper sacrifice, for this pernicious and vexatious claim, which no honest minister will think himself warranted to act upon, and which no wise one will dare to employ. To you, on the contrary, it is every thing which makes existence a blessing, it involves your greatest interests, and those of your latest posterity; it comprehends equally the two great objects of property and personal liberty, and as far as any human arrangement can do so, it binds the two kingdoms for ever to each other by a firm compact, to which each may appeal, and which never can be mistaken. With this security in your hands, could Lord Abingdon's bill produce the smallest ferment among you? but till you have attained it, anxiety and doubt must for ever prevail; every custom-house regulation will be an object of your jealousy, and every mistaken words respecting Ireland, a matter of misgiving to your happiness. The people will not for ever bear so uneasy a state of suspense. The period of a general election is not very remote, they will then naturally enquire, what measures are

wanting

I have

I have [illegible] and [illegible] no [illegible]
[illegible] of my [illegible] which I have the
[illegible] [illegible]; the [illegible] [illegible]
which [illegible] us to [illegible] [illegible] shall be
my example. I desire to lead no [illegible] opinion,
but I claim a right to declare my own. My
conduct shall be implicitly directed by that
which the Irish nation shall think fit to pursue;
if she shall upon mature reflection, determine
to leave the great question of her rights in its
present situation, my lips shall be closed on the
subject for ever. If, on the contrary, the sen-
timents which you have declared shall spread, as
I suspect they will, thro' every part of the king-
dom; if it shall become the prayerful desire to
make one more, and I hope a final effort for a
settlement with Great Britain, no zeal, no ener-
gy shall be wanting on my part to contribute
to its success: convinced, as I have long been,
that by adhering to that line of conduct, I shall
discharge the double duty which I owe to my
sovereign and to my country.